

**PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT REPORT**

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**DATE:** June 11, 2003

**TO:** Orange County Planning Commission

**FROM:** Planning & Development Services Department/Current Planning Services Division

**SUBJECT:** Public Hearing on Planning Application PA03-0018 for Site Development Permit

**PROPOSAL:** Construction and operation of a private school on 5.4 acres for up to 586 students enrolled in grades kindergarten through eighth grade. The school facility will utilize interim facilities at the start of construction in the summer of 2003 consisting of nine modular buildings for the first five years of operation and then transition into two permanent buildings totaling 64,680 square feet. The applicant estimates that 294 students will be enrolled the first year of operation with full enrollment in 2009. A total of 78 (ultimately 110) parking spaces and a play field are proposed during the interim building phase.

**LOCATION:** The proposal is located in Planning Area 3 of the Ladera Planned Community, northeasterly of the intersection of O'Neill Drive and Sienna Parkway. Fifth Supervisorial District.

**APPLICANT:** Stoneybrooke Christian School, project developer  
DMB Ladera, LLC, master developer

**STAFF** William V. Melton, Project Manager  
**CONTACT:** Phone: (714) 834-2541 FAX: (714) 667-8344

**SYNOPSIS:** Current Planning Services Division recommends Planning Commission approval of PA03-0018 for Site Development Permit subject to the attached Findings and Conditions of Approval.

**BACKGROUND:**

The subject site is within Planning Area 3, subarea 3B of Ladera Planned Community. The site is approximately 5.4 acres in size and has been rough graded. Planning Area 3B has a land use designation of Residential. The proposed private school is classified as a community facility and is a principal permitted use subject to the approval of an Area Plan and a Site Development Permit. Area Plan AP99-02 (processed through Planning Application PA99-0062) covered all of Planning Area 3 and was approved by the Planning Commission on June 29, 1999. The subject site is recognized in the Area Plan as a potential Community Facility site.

Project Description

The proposed project is a Site Development Permit application to allow for interim and permanent facilities for Stoneybrooke Christian School in three phases of construction. Stoneybrooke is a non-denominational independent Christian School established in 1983. The current campus is located at 26300 Via Escolar, San Juan Capistrano, contains over 40,000 square feet of classroom facilities and has a student population of over 630 students. According to the applicant, the school is accredited through the Association Christian Schools International (ACSI) and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and is fully credentialed with the State of California.

The **Phase 1** interim school facilities would be housed in nine temporary modular buildings (labeled Buildings A through I on the site plan) and an interim play field. Buildings A, B, C, F, G and H measure 48 feet by 60 feet in size and are separated into four equal areas providing for a total of 21 classroom areas maximum and three administrative areas. Buildings D and I are used for restrooms. Building E (also measuring 48 feet by 60 feet) is use as a multipurpose room. These modular buildings will be approved by the State of California (HCD) prior to manufacturing. The required parking for this phase of the school is 42 spaces, based on the Zoning Code off-street parking requirement of 2 spaces per classroom. A total of 78 parking spaces will be provided per the interim plan (including 4 handicapped spaces). Additionally, a total of 92 automobile stacking and student pickup/drop-off spaces are provided. Access to the drop-off area is from both Siena Parkway and O'Neill Drive. The applicant proposes that the access from Siena Parkway will only be used during drop-off periods. A gate will be utilized during school hours to close the access from Siena Parkway.

The **Phase 2** construction, which is the first phase of implementing the permanent facilities, would entail construction of Phase A of the classroom building (a total of 15 class rooms/labs for grades 7 and 8) and the permanent 14,734 square foot gymnasium adjacent to Sienna Parkway. This phase replaces modular classrooms A, B and C and modular restroom Building D. Building E would switch from a multi-purpose room to a maximum of four classrooms. Buildings F, G and H, and restroom Building I would remain as modular facilities. Phase 2 provides for up to 29 classrooms. A total of 91 parking spaces would be provided per the Phase 2 plan (including 6 handicapped spaces). The same 92 automobile stacking and student pickup/drop-off spaces provided under Phase 1 will be maintained.

The **Phase 3** construction would entail two permanent buildings; the 14,734 square foot gymnasium built in Phase 2, and the completion of the 47,950 square foot classroom building (a total of 24 classrooms and 12 lab areas), for a total square footage of 62,684 square feet. The elementary school, which has two classrooms each for grades kindergarten through sixth grade, will house the southern wing of the classroom building, the junior high, which has five classrooms each for grades 7 and 8, will occupy the north wing. School administration and a library will occupy the central portion on the first floor of the building. The permanent plan includes a full softball diamond/soccer field sized play area in the location of the interim Buildings E through I. The parking required for this final phase is 68 spaces, based on 34 individual classrooms and lab rooms. A total of 110 parking spaces are provided in the permanent plan (including 6 handicapped spaces). The additional parking is provided to facilitate parent involvement and to facilitate special events (including open houses, back-to-school nights and parent bible studies) that are held both during the school time and in the evening, not to allow for future expansion to the currently proposed 586 students. The same 92 automobile stacking and student pickup/drop-off spaces provided under Phase 1 and Phase 2 will be maintained.

The table following depicts the projected student population of the school. During the first year of operation Stoneybrooke will offer classes from Kindergarten through the third grade and grades seven and eight. The school anticipates adding one grade per school year, which would result in an enrollment as follows on the chart below. The dates show are subject to the school opening in the fall of 2003.

	<b>ELEMENTARY</b>			<b>JUNIOR HIGH</b>			<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>
Year	Grades Offered	Classes Total	Total El. Students	Grades Offered	Classes Total	Total JH Students	Max. Number of students
2003-04	K-3	6	144	7 - 8	6	150	294
2004-05	K-4	8	192	7 - 8	6	153	345
2005-06	K-5	11	264	7 - 8	6	153	417
2006-07	K-6	13	312	7 - 8	6	153	465
2007-08	K-6	14	336	7 - 8	7	175	511
2008-09	K-6	14	336	7 - 8	9	225	561
2009-10	K-6	14	336	7 - 8	10	250	586

**SURROUNDING LAND USE:**

Direction	Planning Area	Land Use Designation	Existing Land Use
Project Site	3A	Residential, community facility	Vacant, graded
North	3A	Residential	Vacant, graded
South	4	Residential, school site	Vacant and graded. Future site of Capistrano Unified School District elementary school
East	3A	Residential	Single-family residences
West	3A	Residential	Single-family under construction

**REFERRAL FOR COMMENT AND PUBLIC NOTICE:**

A Notice of Hearing was mailed to all owners of record within 300 feet of the subject site and approximately 40 additional residents easterly of the project site. Additionally, a notice was posted at the site, at the 300 N. Flower Building and as required by established public hearing posting procedures. A copy of the planning application and a copy of the proposed site plan were distributed for review and comment to eight County Divisions, the Orange County Fire Authority, Santa Margarita Water District and the Capistrano Unified School District (CUSD). As of the writing of this staff report, No comments raising issues with the project that could not be addressed by standard conditions of approval have been received from other County divisions. The CUSD submitted comments raising concerns on potential traffic impacts. Their comment letter is included in this report as Exhibit 3 and is discussed later in this report.

**CEQA COMPLIANCE:**

The proposed project is covered by Final EIR 555, previously certified on October 17, 1995, and Addendum PA03-0018 (Exhibit 4). Prior to project approval, this EIR and Addendum must be found adequate to satisfy the requirements of CEQA by the Planning Commission. Appendix A contains the required CEQA Finding.

**DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:**

Project Conformance with Development Standards

The proposed project is located in Planning Area 3B of the Ladera Planned Community, which has a land use designation of Residential. The proposed private school is classified as a community facility and is a principal permitted use subject to the approval of an Area Plan and Site Development Permit. The Residential designation has a setback requirement of 5 feet from a street. The project, both as a temporary use and permanent use, proposes a minimum setback of 20 feet. The maximum height permitted is 35 feet with certain architectural features to a height of 45 feet; the project conforms to the height standard. The regulations for certain types of residential products permit maximum site coverage of 60 percent; the proposed project as a site coverage of 17 percent. Because the proposal conforms to all applicable development and parking standards, Section XII "Site Development Permits" of the Ladera PC, administrative review and approval (no public hearing required) is normally required for Site Development Permits. However, because of potential concerns raised by CUSD, a determination was made that the Planning Commission should be the decision maker on the permit request as provided for in Zoning Code Section 7-9-150.3.

As noted under the Background section of this report, the proposed school will be constructed in three phases: an interim Phase 1 using portable modular structures; a second Phase 2 that includes construction of a two permanent structures and use of some modular units; and, a final Phase 3 that has the construction of the permanent school facility and the removal of all modular structures. The proposed school at each phase conforms to both the Residential and Community Facility site development standards applicable to the site. The parking provided at each phase exceeds this

minimum by providing 78 parking spaces (including 4 handicapped spaces) for the Phase I construction, 91 spaces (including 6 handicapped spaces) for the Phase 2 construction; and 110 parking spaces for the project build out permanent plan (including 6 handicapped spaces). The site access points on O'Neill Drive and Sienna, the automobile circulation and central parking area will be constructed during the first phase and will remain through project completion.

### Stoneybrooke Operational Plan

The applicant has submitted an Operational Plan (Exhibit 2). Per the Stoneybrooke School Operational Plan, upon arrival at either of the drive locations, the driver will be met by Stoneybrooke staff and directed into the traffic flow. Upon arrival at the drop-off location additional staff members will assist students in their efforts to disembark from the auto. The Operational Plan also includes a drop-off and pickup procedure to be carried out by school personnel wearing distinctive clothing (red jackets) stationed every 15-20 feet to ensure that drop-off and loading is done simultaneously throughout the drop-off and pickup area. The procedure proposed entails 10 vehicles disembarking at the same time, ensuring a safe but rapid arrival of students. All 10 vehicles will be held in place until all of the students in that particular group are disembarked or picked up safely. Upon completing the drop-off or pickup of students, all traffic will be required to exit the campus via O'Neill Drive.

Should a handicapped driver need to drop off a student, he/she would still be in the normal flow of traffic and the students would disembark from the car under the same guidelines as the rest of the student population. In the instance where a handicapped student's parents need to park and enter the campus, traffic would be stopped so that the monitors could assist the family's car in entering and exiting the handicap parking area. It should also be noted that junior high students would not be allowed to dismiss from the cars except in the designated drop off areas. They would cross at the designated crosswalk with the assistance of the school personnel stationed at that position.

### Stoneybrooke Traffic Management

To facilitate the arrival and departure of students at the campus the applicant has provided a student pickup/drop-off plan for each of the three phases including automobile stacking (assuming a 15 foot car-length) for 92 cars in each scenario. It is anticipated that 70% of the students will arrive via the O'Neill driveway with the balance arriving through the Sienna drive or on foot (approximately 15%) from the nearby Ladera villages. The Sienna driveway will be limited to arrivals during the peak morning hours. The gate at Sienna will primarily afford easy access for the families in the northern portion of Ladera Ranch. It will be open during drop off and pick up times (7:30 - 8:45 a.m. and 2:30-3:45 pm). It will be closed during school hours as part of the school's perimeter security measures.

An area of consideration regarding pickup/drop-off period is the potential impact on nearby residential areas with school traffic overflowing on residential streets and impeding residential driveway access. The project is located at the intersection of Sienna Parkway and O'Neill Drive, both local collector streets. The nearest residential area is 1,800 feet up O'Neill and 500 feet on Sienna. Based on the site's ability to provide 92 stacking and pick-up/drop-off spaces, the potential overflow onto the streets does not appear to be an issue.

June 2003 Stoneybrooke School Traffic Analysis:

A traffic analysis has been prepared by Austin-Foust Associates (AFT), dated June 2003 (see Exhibit 5), which concludes that all intersections that will receive measurable traffic from the proposed school, including the roundabout at Sienna Parkway and O'Neill Drive, are forecast to operate at Level of Service (LOS) "D" or better, which is the accepted standard for intersections in the County of Orange. This projection assumes the future traffic forecast for build out of Ladera includes the adjacent CUSD elementary school site.

Specifically, the O'Neill/Sienna roundabout adjacent to the Stoneybrooke and future CUSD K-5 school (Oso Grande) is forecast at LOS "C" during the peak morning half-hour. The Institute of Traffic Engineers (ITE) recently changed their trip generation rate for public schools. The March-April 2003 ITE Westernite Journal suggests a 0.54 generation rate per public school student, much higher than the standard ITE rate of 0.29 per public school student. This contributed to AFA revising their March 2003 forecast for the O'Neill/Sienna roundabout from LOS "B" to LOS "C" during the peak morning half-hour.

The AFA report also includes an analysis of the project's effects at all intersections/links where Stoneybrooke would add 1% or more to anticipated traffic volumes. As discussed above, in particular the Traffic Analysis concludes that additional Stoneybrooke traffic at the intersection of Ortega Highway at Antonio Parkway would in an increase of less than one percent of the total traffic at the AM peak hour. Stoneybrooke estimates that approximately 5% of their total students at the new school would be from areas requiring travel through the Ortega/Antonio intersection. The Traffic Analysis makes a more conservative estimate of 10% of trips requiring travel through the Ortega/Antonio intersection, and concludes that the resultant 17 vehicles in the AM peak hour would result in less than one percent of total traffic through the intersection in the AM peak hour.

PDSB Traffic Review Section and the Transportation Planning Section reviewed the revised June 2003 Traffic Analysis (NOTE: the Traffic Analysis reviewed was dated May 30, 2003 but was reprinted with the June 2003 date to avoid confusion with earlier Traffic Analysis) and found the analysis and conclusions reached as satisfactory. A memo from the Traffic Review Section contained the following statement: *"A Revised Traffic Study, dated May 30, 2003, and an Operational Plan were submitted for review in addition to the Site Plan. The Traffic Study was revised to include discussion of the interim school, as well as, address concerns raised by the Capistrano Unified School District. Traffic Review concurs with the conclusions of the study. The Operational Plan should be made a part of the projects Conditions of Approval to insure enforcement."*

May 2003 Update of Ladera Ranch Traffic Forecast Data:

This updated analysis (Exhibit 6) summarizes all proposed land uses and trip generation at buildout of Ladera Ranch. As summarized at the bottom of Page A-1, and in Table A-3, a comparison of the current land uses and trip generation rates (including Stoneybrooke Christian School and all three CUSD schools) reveals trip generation projections external to Ladera which do not exceed those forecast in the 1995 EIR 555 for Ladera and the Antonio Parkway expansion.

### Carpooling

Based on Stoneybrooke's experience at their San Juan Capistrano Campus, they anticipate that at least 50% of their constituency would carpool. The school provides each enrolling family with detailed car pooling information during registration. Families are encouraged to contact those in their neighborhood to establish car pools. These carpools are both "multi-kid;" from the same family and "multi-family;" serving more than one family. This concept is bolstered by a condition of approval included; "Traffic Control" and "Monitoring", that provide for review of the detailed plans and programs to ensure ongoing consistency with the project operations plan.

### Architectural Plans

The site plan package includes proposed architectural plans and elevations, and includes photographic examples of the proposed modular buildings. The permanent structures shown on the conceptual elevations would include an architectural feature, which exceeds the 35-foot height limit (up to 45 feet), but is an architectural feature only (non-habitable) and does not exceed 10% of the roof area. Since the elevations submitted are conceptual in nature, staff has included a condition of approval requiring final building plans and elevations be reviewed prior to the issuance of a building permit.

### Landscape Plan

The proposed landscape plan includes information regarding the slope adjacent to the parking facility, which is to be retained in ownership by the Ladera Ranch Maintenance Corporation (LRMC), the master homeowners association. In addition to the 20' building setbacks shown on both the interim and permanent site plans, there is an additional landscaped area adjacent to Sienna Parkway (at least 20-foot in width) and O'Neill Drive (at least 30-foot in width) outside the project boundary, which are also to be retained in ownership by the Ladera Ranch Maintenance Corporation (LRMC), the master homeowners association. The landscaping plan submitted address the Phase 1 plan only. Conditions of approval address final landscaping plans at project build out.

### Capistrano Unified School District

As mentioned, CUSD submitted comments (Exhibit 3) expressing concerns about traffic. (CUSD commented on an earlier May 2003 iteration of the Traffic Analysis and on the May 8, 2003 transmittal memo from Jay Bullock, the project applicant. The Traffic Analysis has since been revised. The June 2003 dated Traffic Analysis is included in this report as Exhibit 5). Following is a discussion on those comments and staff's responses (in bold).

- a. Page 1, Paragraph 3: "... the Traffic Analysis for the proposed school should have included, at a minimum, the key intersection of Ortega Highway and Antonio Parkway". Also, on Page 1, Paragraph 4: "... the Bullock memo suggests that traffic at the intersection of Ortega Highway and Antonio Parkway would be less than one percent of the total traffic for the intersection. However, no analysis is provided or referenced, so it is unclear how such a conclusion was reached. There is no such analysis in the Austin-Foust May 2003 Traffic Study."

On pages 9 through 11 of the Traffic Analysis, Austin-Foust Associates concludes that the Ortega/Antonio "... intersection will carry less than 10 percent of Stoneybrooke trips, which are estimated at 17 vehicles per hour equivalent for the critical half hour period. This number is less than one percent of total traffic through the intersection in the AM peak hour and hence does not warrant a specific analysis for this project. In addition, subsequent to the CUSD comment letter, Austin-Foust has incorporated an intersection capacity utilization (ICU) analysis of the Ortega/Antonio intersection into their final Traffic Analysis. This ICU analysis compared the anticipated traffic at Ortega/Antonio with and without the Stoneybrooke school project, and concludes the project does not significantly impact this intersection.

- b. Page 2, Paragraph 4: *"Additionally, Mr. Bullock asserts that Stoneybrooke's San Juan Capistrano campus would be more convenient to students from areas south of Ladera than the proposed project. We strongly disagree with this assessment ..."*

The revised Traffic Analysis includes an appendix prepared by Stoneybrooke School, estimating their "catchment area" based on their targeted marketing area, and their discussions with families currently served by their San Juan Capistrano campus who have expressed a desire to transfer their children to the proposed Ladera school. Only one family from the area southwest of Ladera is transferring, out of a total of 15 families switching to the proposed Ladera school. This family resides in far easterly San Juan Capistrano, near Ortega Highway and the City boundary, and their travel distance to the new school would be slightly less than they currently travel. Stoneybrooke estimates that approximately 5% of their total students at the new school would be from areas requiring travel through the Ortega/Antonio intersection. The Traffic Analysis makes a more conservative estimate of 10% of trips requiring travel through the Ortega/Antonio intersection, and concludes that the resultant 17 vehicles in the AM peak hour would result in less than one percent of total traffic through the intersection in the AM peak hour.

- c. Page 2, Paragraph 5: CUSD asks "... how the County proposes to monitor and enforce Stoneybrooke Private School's proposed staggered start time, including actions that the County will take if the Stoneybrooke Private School fails to adjust their schedule in accordance with the District's schedule."

**The applicant has agreed to the following conditions of approval, which directly address CUSD's concerns:**

- **Traffic Control:** Prior to the issuance of certificates of use and occupancy for Phase II, Applicant/Operator shall design and submit a traffic control system for review and approval of the Manager, Current Planning Services. Said system shall include a staggered pick-up/delivery car-pool schedule, traffic directional signage, and specific instructions to parents regarding prohibition of intrusion by driving or parking on Sienna Parkway or O'Neill Drive, or in adjacent residential neighborhoods during the delivery/pick-up period.
- **School Hours:** Classroom hours will generally occur between the hours of 8:15 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. The arrival times will be staggered, with Junior High classes beginning at 8:15



a.m. and grades 1 through 6 classes beginning at 8:30 a.m. in order to minimize potential conflicts with the anticipated 8:00 a.m. start time of Capistrano Unified School District (CUSD) elementary school located southeasterly of O'Neill Drive at Sienna Parkway. Stoneybrooke will offer an optional start time of 7:30 a.m. to accommodate the special needs of a maximum of 50 students (day care, optional language class, etc.). Stoneybrooke will also offer after school sports, scouting and club programs that will be scheduled generally no later than 6:00 p.m. The ball field will not be lighted for nighttime play.

- **On-Going Monitoring:** 60 days prior to the beginning of each school year the applicant shall coordinate with Capistrano School District to ensure that the starting times of each school are such that the staggered starting times for Stoneybrooke School begin at least 15 minutes apart from the starting time for the CUSD elementary school located southeasterly of O'Neill Drive at Sienna Parkway.
- **Basic Compliance:** Failure to abide by and faithfully comply with any and all conditions attached to this approving action shall constitute grounds for the revocation of said action by the Orange County Planning Commission.

- d. Page 2, Paragraph 6, Sentence 3: CUSD suggests that ... *“the analysis should be performed to assess the compatibility of the operation of these schools on opposing street corners”*.

**The Traffic Analysis does include an analysis of the compatibility of two adjacent schools, but to further clarify, Austin-Foust has added the following statement on Page 11, Paragraph 2: “...the Operations Plan for Stoneybrooke will place less than 37 percent of the arrivals in this time period. Hence, scheduling classes in this manner substantially reduces the impact of having the two school in close proximity”**

## **CONCLUSION:**

The proposed private school proposal is a principal permitted use on the site. The project conforms to all site development standards required for a community facility under the Residential designation. The private school exceeds all off-street parking requirements at each of the three phases of development. Because the project conforms to all required standards, the project could be processed administratively without the need for a public hearing. However, because of the concerns raised by the CUSD, the site development permit has been referred to the Planning Commission for their review and action. Both the Traffic Review Section and Transportation Planning Section staff have reviewed the traffic analysis report prepared for this proposal. They have concluded that the report, as modified and corrected, adequately addresses the traffic impacts associated with this proposal and that the conclusions reached in the report are valid. The traffic report, together with the school's operational and traffic management plan and the fact that the school has agreed to work with CUSD to stagger school starting times to avoid conflicts in vehicle movement has led staff to the opinion that the project should be compatible with existing and future permitted uses in the vicinity.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Planning and Development Services Department/Current Planning Services Division recommends the Planning Commission:

- a. Receive staff presentation and public testimony as appropriate; and,
- b. Approve PA03-0018 for Site Development Permit subject to the attached findings and conditions of approval.

Respectfully submitted

John B. Buzas, Manager  
Current Planning Services Department

WVM

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**APPENDICES:**

- A. Recommended Findings
- B. Recommended Conditions of Approval

**EXHIBITS:**

1. Applicant's Letter of Explanation
2. Stoneybrooke School Operational Plan
3. Comment letter from CUSD dated May 22, 2003
4. Environmental Documentation
5. Traffic Analysis dated June 2003 prepared by Austin-Foust Associates, Inc.
6. Ladera Ranch Traffic Forecast Data (May 2003 updated)
7. Site Plans

**APPEAL PROCEDURE:** Any interested person may appeal the decision of the Orange County Planning Commission on this permit to the Board of Supervisors within 15 calendar days of the decision upon submittal of required documents and a filing fee of \$760.00 filed at the Development Processing Center, 300 N. Flower St., Santa Ana. If you challenge the action taken on this proposal in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this report, or in written correspondence delivered to the Planning and Development Services Department.